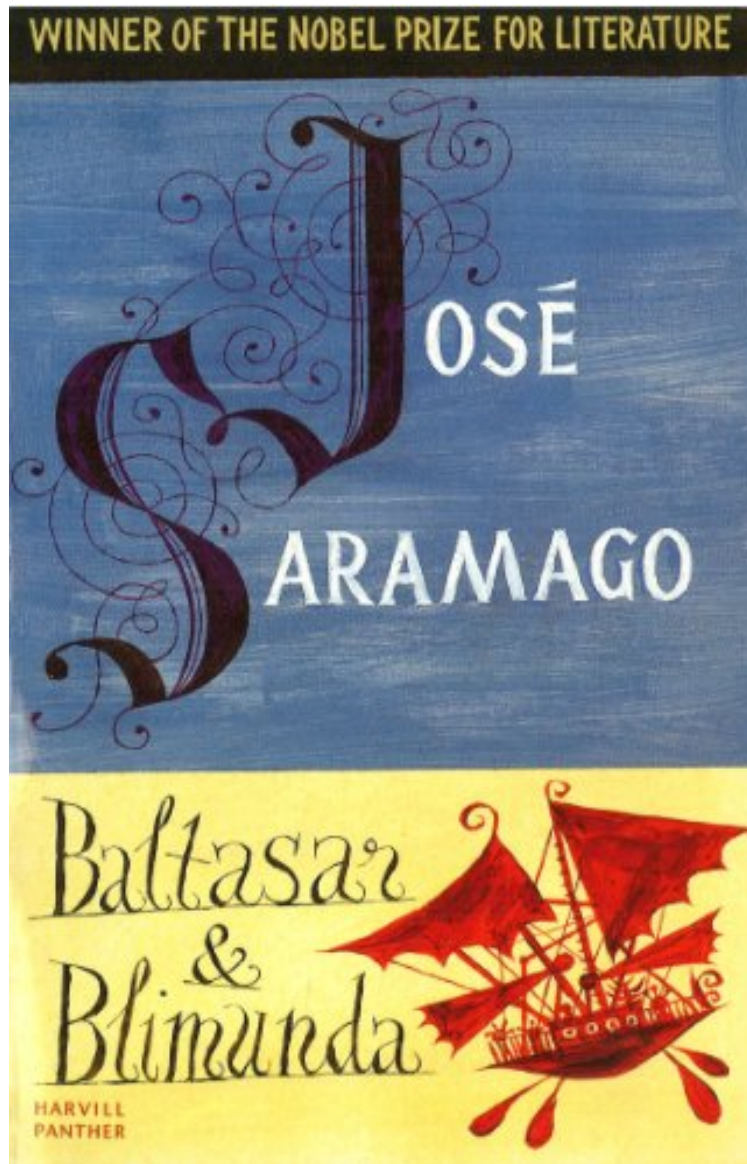


[Read now] Baltasar Blimunda (Panther)

Baltasar Blimunda (Panther)

Von Jos Saramago

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Von Jos Saramago : Baltasar Blimunda (Panther) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Baltasar Blimunda (Panther):

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A tale from the oral traditionVon vjaidka@ch1.dot.net.inThis masterpiece by the Nobel laureate, Jos Saramago, has an epic quality that raises it above the ordinary. The backdrop against which the story is told is Portugal in the eighteenth century, a superstition-ridden country peopled by masses who still believe in miracles, in times when theological

standards are unbending and any deviation from the accepted norm is punished as sorcery. Baltasar, a crippled soldier returns home from war to such a milieu. He represents Everyman living a life of quiet dignity, pushed around occasionally by circumstance, cherishing little joys and comforts with his consort, Blimunda. The binding force of the story is the tender relationship between Baltasar and Blimunda, a love that is not expressed in words and that does not wane with time. A third character in the novel is Lourenco, the "Flying Priest." The three are brought together by a seemingly impossible dream of constructing a flying machine. What is special about the book is the writer's narratorial skill: Saramago takes on the traditional role of a story-teller without being clever or fantastical. He narrates a plain, simple story without any superfluous embellishments. It is this simplicity and honesty that goes straight to the heart and lingers on. The author does not pause to indulge in verbal pirouettes or stylistic gymnastics. Nor does he gloss over metaphors and similes to conjure elaborate conceits out of them. Saramago borrows several features from the oral tradition: Baltasar and Blimunda is a stringing together of several loosely-related episodes and incidents, yet there is a structural circularity in the whole. The tone is sometimes easy and conversational when focused on specific incidents, sometimes it has an incantatory quality, sometimes it slows its pace to describe the mire and filth through which the characters must toil; and sometimes it soars high into the skies with the Passarola. The story of Baltasar and Blimunda seems to get its power from the rhythms of the cosmos which it invokes constantly. The two main characters are nicknamed after the sun and the moon. There are repeated references to the wind, the rain, to cyclical motions of time, to the earth, the heavens and the sky. In the attempt to fly into the skies one may detect the Lucifer motif or, more appropriately, the Icarus pattern: human aspirations daring to dream, foraging into the unknown and, of course, paying a price for the dream. Baltasar's fate reminds us that such is man's lot. All the while the heavens remain unperturbed, always beckoning, always tempting man to soar higher and higher. That man's reach should exceed his grasp or what else is the heaven for? This is what the author seems to suggest. After putting the book aside, the reader is left with a lingering impression of a pair of lovers wrenched apart: he flying high somewhere in the mysterious spaces above, she roaming the world aimlessly, weeping, wailing, searching for a lost love.

0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Love in the Time of Inquisition Von Chinmay Hota LOVE IN THE TIME OF INQUISITION What's love got to do in a society that is governed by religious bigotry and royal whims? Apparently nothing. But it is love between two ordinary human beings around which Jos Saramago, weaves his tale of historical fantasy, 'Baltasar and Blimunda'. And to what great effect! The romance, spanning almost a lifetime, traversing the length and breadth of Portugal, even soaring into the sky, brings a breath of fresh air to a plot that abounds in filth, brutality, indifference and decay. The tenderness of the relationship serves to make the surrounding evil appear murkier, while the all-pervading depravity indirectly gives more substance to the experience of love. The lovers, Baltasar, a former soldier and Blimunda, a woman with a mysterious power of clairvoyance, meet each other in the killing fields of Inquisition. While Baltasar has lost an arm fighting a war for his motherland, Blimunda has been separated from her mother who has been banished to a far-off land by the Holy Office of Inquisition. But wars and Inquisition are not the only forces of evil that are eroding the foundations of a nation that has left its glory far behind. 18th-century Portugal is full of blood and gore. Take for instance, the brutal bull-fight sessions so vividly presented by Saramago, 'The place smells of burned flesh, but this odour gives no offence to nostrils accustomed to the great barbecue of the auto-da-fe, besides the bull ends up on somebody's plate and is put to good use in the end' (page-90). There are also murdered bodies scattered in the streets of Lisbon. Famines, plague, earthquake, Spanish invasions, poverty and squalour -- all add to the misery of the land. Strange it may seem, but this harsh milieu spurs the ambitions of two very different characters in the novel. The king, Dom Joo, the Fifth, wants to build the biggest Basilica in the country to redeem a pledge, when God grants him a male heir. 'In a king, modesty would be a sign of weakness' (Page-4). Padre Bartolemeu, a scholar priest entertains the ambition to fly in a machine made of steel and cane, one that is fuelled by human 'will'. The king's project is a product of his fancy, while the priest's is born of true conviction. Baltasar and Blimunda get drawn into both these projects, by turns. After conquering the sky with the help of the Padre's machine, they move to Mafra to work on the construction of the Basilica. Wherever they are, their ardour for each other remains undiminished. Doing justice to their nick names -- Seven-Suns and Seven-Moons -- they attract each other like heavenly bodies, eternally. The author excels in his depiction of contrasts. The king and the queen present the most incongruous pair in the novel. But even the seemingly harmonious Baltasar and Blimunda are at bottom quite disparate. Baltasar's iron arm and capacity for tough physical labour represents hard reality whereas Blimunda with her visions, dreams and the 'collection of wills' appears magical and ethereal. But the biggest contrast is reserved for the two long and arduous processions, which make up a substantial part of the narrative. The frustrations, accidental deaths and other painful incidents during the expedition to transport a big slab of stone to the construction site is skillfully counterpoised by the opulence, pomp and ceremony of the royal family is cavalcade. The cumbersome and labourious journey of the slab also finds a matching antithesis in the free soaring of the flying-machine. The breathlessly long, run-on sentence is Saramago's trademark. He strays from or gets involved in the narrative as the situation demands. The pithy one-liners, though less frequent here than in 'The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis', lend colour to the narrative. ('By eating frugally, we can purify our thoughts, through suffering we can purge our souls' (Page-20)). To check the severity of the proceedings, the author intervenes with humour from time to time, ('... stone slabs suspended from yokes that rest

on their necks and shoulders, forever be praised whoever invented the pad that lessens the pain' (Page-224)). 'Baltasar and Blimunda' is a compelling novel, which celebrates the power of love and human will, even in the face of dark and sinister forces. Magical elements like visions, dreams, fantasies and so on give a new perspective to the hard reality and a new dimension to our experience of history. (Quotations from The Harvill Press, London edition.)

0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Okay, Y'all Get a Grip Now Von Eugene G. Barnes Found it rather dull. I'd like to think that the problem I had staying interested in this novel was because it was rendered into stilted English ("One sees..." ought to be rendered "You see..." But Giovanni Pontiero never did.) But I suspect that the wooden prose is not the only problem. After a few pages of showing us that medieval people lived with the same onerous self-interest and benign amorality with which modern people live, readers may begin to get restless: "Okay, so your point is...?" But it just goes on like that. Saramago's plot has magic happening in it, but it is the magic found in Woody Allen's plots for his movies "Alice" and "The Purple Rose of Cairo" -- and about as interesting. Very few authors can combine magic and gritty realism and bring it off, but Saramago isn't one of them. The blurb refers to Saramago's "loving tolerance of human folly," and that's about as close as you can get to something distinguishing worth oohing and aahing over (following the road the king takes to bankrupting his nation is bracing). Otherwise, there are lots of real 5-star novels out there. Read one of those instead.

Kurzbeschreibung In early 18th-century Lisbon, Baltasar, a soldier who has lost his left hand in battle, falls in love with Blimunda, a young girl with visionary powers. From the day that he follows her home from the auto-da-fe where her mother is burned at the stake, the two are bound body and soul by love of an unassailable strength. A third party shares their supper that evening: Padre Bartolomeu Lourenco, whose fantasy is to invent a flying machine. As the Crown and the Church clash, they pursue his impossible, not to mention heretical, dream of flight.

From Library Journal Saramago's epic novel is set in 18th-century Portugal, a kingdom bloated with plundered wealth and top-heavy with churches and priests. Real events (the erection of an enormous convent in the tiny village of Mafra) and real personages (an heretical priest bent on building a flying machine) figure prominently. But the maimed soldier and his visionary lover named in the title are bit players, for the real protagonist here is Portugal itself in travail. Distanced and ironic, Saramago's novel might well have been written to illustrate Walpole's dictum that "the world is a comedy to those that think, a tragedy to those that feel." Recommended for collections emphasizing modern continental fiction.

Grove Koger, Boise P.L., Id. Copyright 1987 Reed Business Information, Inc. **Pressestimmen** "A mighty novel, variously bawdy, elevated, angry and tender, combining erudition, comedy, heresy, surreal science fiction and countless good stories" (Robert Farren Sunday Independent) "Original and brilliant. It is filled with wonder at man's ability to invest and achieve as well as an aversion to the oppression of state faith... Lovers of Marquez and magical realism will be enchanted by the wonder of this novel, for the colour and vivacity of Saramago's imagination inspires and entertains" (Kate Figs Sunday Times) "Jose Saramago affirms the simple truths as only a writer of rare stature can" (Christopher Wordsworth Guardian)